



Guidelines for Choosing a Driver Training Program

There are several questions you can ask about driver training programs to determine which program meets your needs and provides the best value.

1. Do you need:

- a. information about defensive driving, or
- b. improvement of driving skills to help manage critical driving situations in addition to information?

If you answer a:

There are a variety of online and classroom-only defensive driving programs available. The National Safety Council has several classroom programs and these are relatively inexpensive and offered by a variety of agencies and employers, including the state of Montana for its employees. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) also offers classroom programs geared to the needs of older drivers.

If you answer b:

Then you will need to seek out a program that puts you behind the wheel. As our name indicates, the Montana DR.I.V.E. program is such a program. A full description of the Montana DR.I.V.E. program is available online at www.MontanaDRIVE.mt.gov . However, you may find several behind-the-wheel programs available to you. Here are a few more questions to ask to help you determine which program meets your needs.

2. How long is the workshop, how much of the time is spent in actual driving and how much time is spent in the classroom?

Montana DR.I.V.E. classes are 8 – 10 hours in length. All but about two hours are spent in the vehicles practicing how to control critical driving situations.

3. What is the student-teacher ratio?

Montana DR.I.V.E. classes are limited to 12 participants and there are four instructors. There is a driving coach for each three participants.

4. Do the instructors ride in the car with you or are they somewhere else?

Many programs connect with the car via radio, or stand outside the car and coach several drivers in several cars. The Montana DR.I.V.E. program puts an instructor in every vehicle so that they can observe all driver actions and provide immediate feedback. Educational research indicates that immediate feedback provides the best learning opportunities.

5. How many different driving exercises do the participants receive training in?

Montana DR.I.V.E. provides a variety of training exercises based upon the kinds of situations which cause the most types of crashes in Montana. These include off-road recovery, cornering, controlled emergency braking, evasive steering, skid control, and a new exercise in a specially equipped Skid-Monster vehicle that combines vision, targeting, braking/accelerating transition and vehicle balance.

6. How many different vehicle types does the program have available to provide training in?

Montana DR.I.V.E. has an extensive fleet of vehicle options. This is an added expense, but it is felt it offers a superior training experience for the participants, since many vehicles handle differently. The fleet includes sedans, a 15-passenger van, a dump truck, several school buses, an SUV, an ambulance, a fire truck, and a Skid-Monster equipped car. The participant is encouraged to practice the exercises in a sedan and an alternate vehicle appropriate to their needs.

General Comments. Most national programs that provide in-vehicle training are two to three times the expense of the Montana DR.I.V.E. program. The reason for Montana DR.I.V.E.'s lower cost is that it is a government non-profit user supported program providing services to state agencies, companies, and individuals for the benefit of the public safety. However, if a lower cost program is found, the following questions will help to determine if it is the better value: Are you paying for fewer instructors, fewer vehicle and exercise options, or fewer hours in the vehicles?



Obtain training in the vehicle of your choice from the Montana DR.I.V.E. fleet on the track in Lewistown, MT